

COMING FROM BEHIND: Catching up and Moving Ahead

Our greatest glory is not in never falling, but in rising every time we fall.

Confucius.

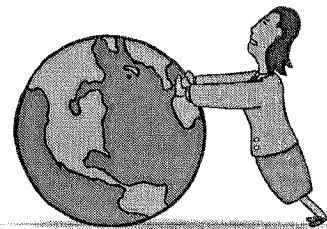
INSTRUCTIONS

This packet covers six topics:

- What it means to be motivated
- Why you may need help in becoming motivated
- How you can catch up and move ahead
- Planning to reach your goal
- Three stories about people who came from behind
- Response sheets

What it means to be motivated

To be motivated means, literally, to be moved. It comes from Latin word, *moveo* (to set in motion, to move, to stir, to affect the feelings). So to be motivated means, literally, to be set in motion. You can daydream about the future all you want, but until you set your sights on what you want to do or who you want to become, and move toward your goals, you'll never have anything but daydreams.

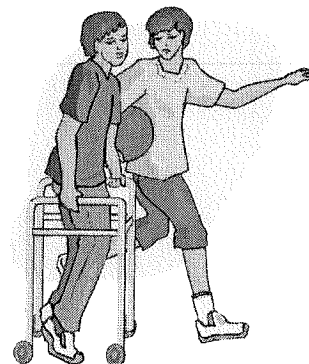


Why you may need help in becoming motivated

Once you become motivated to reach your goal, reaching it can be easy or hard. Usually, the higher or more complicated the goal, the harder the path to it. There are many pitfalls between inspiration and success. There may be some goals for which you'll need help. That's why we have teachers, coaches, counselors, and others who have reached their own goals and know how to help you reach yours. But you have to find the right mentor, whether your goal is to become a concert pianist, an airplane pilot, a good businessman, or a skilled bricklayer. This is also true if your goal is some variety of self-improvement, such as overcoming a tendency to fall behind. Talk to your teachers or counselors. They've

already walked the walk. And most of them are ready to show you how to find your own path. So don't be ashamed to ask for help.

You'd be surprised at how many thousands of highly motivated, physically or developmentally handicapped people move on to set records in a sport or win prizes in their chosen field. Stephen Hawking, one of the world's foremost astrophysicists, has been unable to move his body for over 30 years. Yet during those years he has made more contributions to our knowledge of black holes than anyone alive. Mr. Olympia and Terminator actor Arnold Schwarzenegger was once a skinny kid with a bad heart. And don't forget Marlee Matlin, a young woman who was born with a hearing impairment, but grew up to become a distinguished Academy Award-winning movie and television actress.

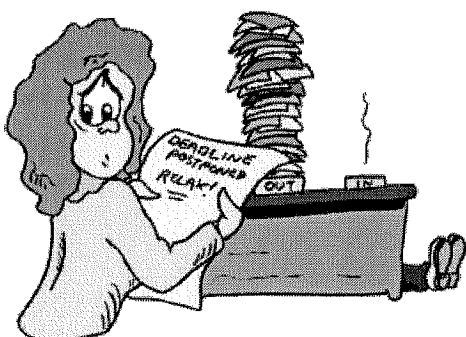


Look around you at all the people who refused to give up, who overcame terrible illnesses and injuries, and went on to become an inspiration to us all. Try to understand that they, too, were once discouraged, but overcame it and went on to realize their dreams. Then make up your mind that you, too, can accomplish things you've only dreamed of until now.

Don't forget: no matter what your goal is, or how much you may have thought about achieving it, sometimes, it's easy to become discouraged. That's when you lose your motivation to improve, quit and give up. Don't let this happen to you!

How you can catch up and move ahead

Now let's talk about your goal: **catching up and moving ahead**. It's easy to fall behind, whether in school, on a job, or just trying to keep up with your obligations. We all fall behind sometimes, and we all know that the further behind one gets, the harder it is to catch up.



The first thing you have to do to catch up is be honest about how you've fallen behind. You should ask yourself, "Why am I behind in my work? Do I fall behind often? Is this a habit? Why do I put off doing the things I know I have to do? Is it fear? Is it lack of motivation? Is it shyness? Is it simply that I try to do too many things? I hardly have time left to do my school work!"

Whatever the reason for your falling behind, you won't solve any problems by sitting around and falling farther behind. You must become motivated to catch up. You must set yourself two goals: The first is to catch up. The second is to understand why you fall behind, so you won't do it again.

Planning your way toward catching up

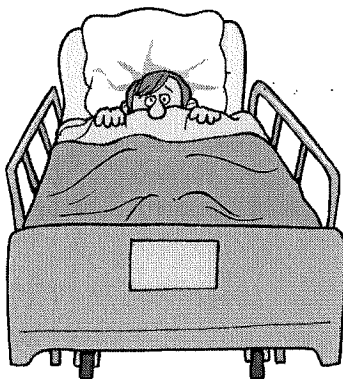
So how do you catch up? Keep the following in mind:

- First, be honest about how you use your time. If you are trying to do too much, figure out which of your activities you could cut back or drop.
- Second, write a plan that will allow you to do the things you have to do, while at the same time catching up and getting back on schedule.
- Third, don't just **think** about catching up. **Catch up!** While you are thinking about all this, think also about the stories in this packet of people who had fallen behind, yet caught up and eventually outdistanced everybody.

Now read the following three stories about people who had fallen behind and through good planning and hard work, finally caught up.

THE SKINNY BOY IN THE FOURTH GRADE

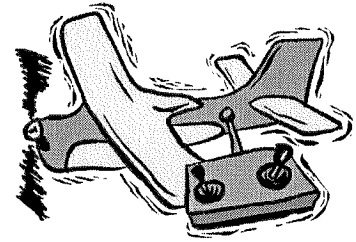
A long time ago, there was a little boy named Joe. He was a bright kid, and in perfect health. One day, while sitting in his fourth grade class, Joe started having chest pains. He told the teacher what was happening, and she let him go home after calling his mom. Joe made it out to the street, and then collapsed. A senior from the high school down the street saw Joe fall, and carried him home.



Joe's parents thanked the senior and took Joe straight to the doctor. As it turned out, Joe had rheumatic fever, which had damaged one of his heart's valves, preventing the heart from sending enough oxygenated blood out into his body. Joe was taken to the hospital immediately, but his parents were told to notify the rest of the family—Joe probably wouldn't last through the night.

But Joe did last through the night, and as the days grew into weeks, he was determined to get better. In those days, people

with heart problems like Joe's were sent to bed. Joe spent the next 14 months in bed. He built model airplanes and read the *Encyclopedia Britannica* to make his free time productive. When he had recovered enough to get up, he was almost twelve years old.



When he went back to school, Joe was put back into the fourth grade. His former classmates were all now in the sixth grade. Joe was too weak to walk to school, so his father had to take him each morning. Joe was embarrassed when the class photograph was made: he towered over all the eight-year-olds in the class. He became the butt of many jokes, none of which made him feel any better about things. But he also felt a great resolve welling up inside himself. He was three years behind, but he was determined to catch up. He studied night and day. He got a double promotion at the end of the semester, and moved on to the fifth grade.

Joe didn't completely catch up until he was in the ninth grade, years later. He caught up physically by working out with weights and overcoming his handicaps. He caught up mentally by sheer determination and hard work. By the time Joe graduated from high school, he was ahead of most of his peers. He wanted to go to college, but didn't have the money. Then he learned that the State Vocational Rehabilitation Agency would pay for his college tuition and books if he qualified for State Aid. Joe took all the tests required and got the Rehab grant. So he went to college after all.



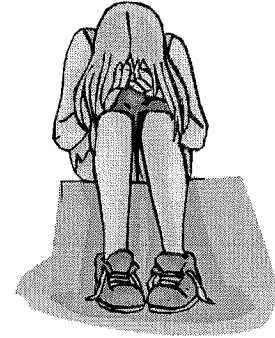
It didn't take Joe long to realize that he wanted to be a college professor. He also realized that he needed a Ph. D. degree in his chosen subject. In four years, Joe had a B.A. degree, and had received a fellowship to pay for the M.A. degree. He completed the M.A. degree in only a year by applying the same study habits he had learned during all those years of catching up. He got another fellowship for the Ph. D., and in three more years received his doctorate. By this time, he was already teaching in a university.

Joe had a long and distinguished career. But he would not have been able to complete the Ph. D. and the M.A. without the fellowships. Likewise, he would never have been able to earn his B.A. without the state tuition grant. And he would never have gotten out of the fourth grade if he hadn't come to terms with his illness and refused to let being behind stand in the way of achieving his goals.

Now that's motivation! If Joe can do it, so can you. Move it!

THE LITTLE GIRL WHO HAD TO WORK

Janie had to work in the afternoons. It wasn't a matter of choice. Her little brother had been hurt in an auto accident. Her father and mother were divorced. There was never enough money. So Janie had to work, whether she wanted to or not. The longer she worked, the farther behind she got in everything she was doing, especially school.



Janie thought about dropping out of high school, but in only three more years she could graduate. She was so far behind, if she dropped out now, she knew she would never finish school. Which meant that she would be doomed to the kind of entry-level job she had right now: working at the local Superburger restaurant. She was depressed and lonely. She was ashamed to tell her friends why she had to work. But they all found out, and some of them even made fun of her. To make it even worse, she was gaining weight from eating the fries she hated.

That's when she met Saleem, a new girl who had just moved into her neighborhood. Saleem was from Afghanistan, and was very shy. She spoke English with an accent, and Janie enjoyed talking to her. They shared their stories, and Janie learned that Saleem's mother and father were both deceased, and her older brother was still somewhere in Afghanistan.



Saleem lived with an aunt and uncle who had emigrated to America ten years earlier. Her family had been destroyed, and although her aunt and uncle loved her, she sometimes felt all alone. Saleem told Janie about how her home had been destroyed by bombs, and how she and her mother had slept in alleyways and had to depend on the help of strangers to survive. There were no jobs, no money, and sudden death seemed to hover around them. They were rescued by the Red Cross, and then got word to relatives in America that they were still alive. She was overjoyed with having the opportunity to work.

At first, Jamie could not believe Saleem's story. She couldn't understand how anybody could survive in the world she described. When she thought about her own troubles as compared to Saleem's, she felt ashamed. She was still living in the house where she grew up. She was healthy and had never been abused. Her situation was hard right now,

but it was a long way from being desperate.

As Janie's and Saleem's conversations continued, she began to understand why she felt so aimless. She was hanging on to the comforts of the past. Saleem, on the other hand, had faced horrors Janie could only imagine. But she had pulled herself together, faced her fears, and was working toward building her future. Saleem had begun a new life.

Janie realized that her greatest enemy was herself. She was lazy, spoiled and aimless, still waiting for someone else to come along and make it all come out right. She resolved then and there to get moving and develop a plan for catching up and finishing school.



One morning, as the sun was just rising over the trees, Janie arrived at work with a spring in her step. When Janie saw Saleem, she ran up to her and gave her a big hug, "What was that for?" Saleem asked.

Janie shouted as she ran to punch the time clock, "For teaching me to count my blessings and get to work!" The next week, she spent an hour with her school counselor, and started working out a plan to catch up.

ALWAYS LATE LARRY

Larry was always coming from behind. He was late with the check for his class ring. He was also late on the payment for his graduation pictures. He had not yet reserved a tuxedo for the senior prom. Nor had he decided what kind of corsage to get for his date. He was two months behind on his car payments. And he just had to get his new license plate today. This situation was not unusual. Larry's friends joked that someday, he would be late for his own funeral.

Larry's problem was simple, although the reasons were complex. He was a procrastinator. He put everything off until the last minute, then he would go into overdrive, do several all-nighters, and meet his obligations in the nick of time. He was graduating this year, and planned to go to college in the Fall. But he hadn't even applied to the local colleges, let alone one of the universities. In fact, he made a game of this kind of behavior.

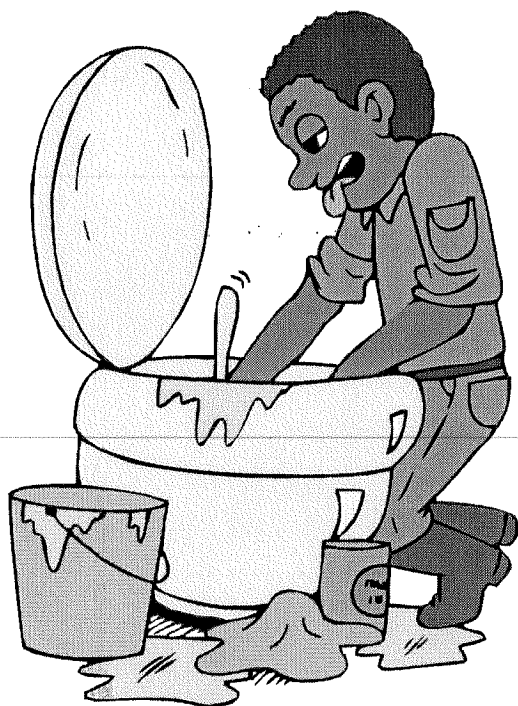


Finally, two months before graduation, he started bringing his bills up to date, getting his work done, and applying for admission at several community colleges. He squeaked by and graduated with the rest of his class, but waited too late to buy his date a corsage. She walked out on him at the dance.



It wasn't until Larry was old enough to pay income taxes that being behind got him in real trouble. He forgot to file a return with the Internal Revenue Service. When they caught up with him, he had to pay the taxes plus a big fine. By the way, he is now behind on the loan he had to get to pay the IRS.

Did Larry make it into college? No, it was too late for that. Did he find a job? No good ones left. So he joined the Marines. Did his drill Instructor motivate him? You'd better believe it! The sergeant had no interest in what Larry wanted. He was interested only in doing whatever would turn this recruit into a good soldier. Whenever Larry appeared to lack motivation, his sergeant supplied it for him.



Larry suddenly started being on time for everything, if only to avoid having to clean the barracks latrine again with a toothbrush. Larry had learned a valuable lesson: if you don't learn to motivate yourself, sometimes somebody may come along who will motivate you whether you want to be motivated or not—and you may not like what you are being motivated to do.

That night, Larry started work on a plan that would help him be more focused and better able to cope with the things he had to do to insure a future for himself. So did Larry learn to shoot well enough to survive in combat? Did he learn how to avoid falling behind? Of course. Some people just seem to have to do things the hard way. But he was forever grateful to the tough Drill Sergeant.

Now turn to the next page and write your responses to the questions listed.

MOTIVATION PACKET # 1: RESPONSE SHEET

COMING FROM BEHIND: Catching up and Moving Ahead

NAME _____

DATE _____

WHAT TO DO

Below are ten questions about the text you have just read. These questions will help you to focus on how to become motivated, set goals, and make plans to achieve those goals. Some questions may not have “right” or “wrong” answers. Take time to think before you write.

Write your answers in the spaces below the questions. If there is not enough room, write on the backs of these sheets. Be neat, spell correctly, use good grammar, and write in complete sentences. If you don't understand what you are supposed to do, ask the person who gave you this Packet.

When you finish, give the Packet and your Response sheets to the person who gave them to you.

1. You have fallen behind and need to catch up. Explain why you fell behind and what you can do to catch up.

2. Are you having trouble becoming motivated to catch up? Explain.

3. In Joe's story, why was he behind in school? Why do you suppose he was able to overcome multiple illnesses and not only catch up but go on to excel? Explain.
4. What role did careful planning play in Joe's recovery and success? Explain.
5. Why was Janie so angry about having to work?
6. What did Saleem say that brought Janie out of her discouragement? What did Janie realize about herself?

7. Why did Larry get so far behind? Explain.

8. How was it possible for Larry's drill instructor to motivate him? Explain.

9. Assess your own reasons for not being motivated to catch up. List them below:

10. Outline a personal plan for catching up and not falling behind again.